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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Third periodic reports of States parties

VENEZUELA*

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of Venezuela, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.24 and Amend.1; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.74 and 77 and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/41/45), paras. 264-313; for the second periodic report submitted by the Government of Venezuela, see CEDAW/C/13/Add.21; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.201 and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/47/38), paras. 405-437.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The main purpose of this report is to summarize the progress achieved by Venezuela between 1989 and the present day, in pursuance of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2. Briefly, it can be said that the changes which the Latin American countries have undergone in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres have had a significant influence on all societies and their members, particularly women.

3. Although the recession of the 1980s and early 1990s had a considerable impact on women, it has enabled them to seek new channels of participation in society and national life. The call for a new approach to the concept of democracy – from representative to participatory – is fostering the emergence of new social actors, among whom women now figure prominently, having been most affected by the economic circumstances prevailing in the countries of the region.

4. Venezuela has not been immune to this situation; Venezuelan women have, however, made significant advances in the political, legal and social fields in recent years.

5. Nevertheless, considerable inequalities continue to exist in the economic sphere, particularly with regard to the employment sector, where women still receive less pay than men for work of equal responsibility.

6. A comprehensive approach from a gender perspective is necessary for the advancement of women on an equal basis with men, in order to prevent such situations as that described above and to overcome the entire range of problems relating to women's social and legal status.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE COUNTRY

A. Demographic data

7. Situated to the north of South America, Venezuela covers an area of 916,455 km^2, its total population in 1990 being 21,177,149. The official language is Spanish.

8. According to statistical data produced by the Central Office of Statistics and Information (OCEI), which is the leading government institution in this field, the year-on-year rate of population growth for 1990 averaged 2.6 per cent, this being one of the highest in Latin America. However, Venezuela has a relatively low demographic density, at 21.6 persons per km^2, the population being concentrated in the central north-coast area of the national territory.

9. The composition of the Venezuelan population shows an almost equal split between females (49.56 per cent) and males (50.44 per cent) and, according to OCEI estimates, this trend will be maintained over the next 20 years.

10. Since the 1960s, Venezuela has been undergoing rapid urbanization, and the spatial distribution of the population has accordingly followed the classic trend in such cases: in 1960, 64.1 per cent of the population was concentrated in urban areas, while the remaining 35.1 per cent resided in rural areas; by 1991, the urban/rural split was 83.99/16.01 per cent.

11. Slight differences can be seen in the spatial distribution by sex, the female percentage being higher in urban areas than in rural areas; this indicates that, in terms of rural-to-urban migration, Venezuelan women have had greater mobility than men, most noticeably in the age group between 25 and 44 years.

12. Like the total population of Venezuela, its female population contains a high proportion of young persons, although the trend is that of gradual population ageing owing to the combined fall in fertility and mortality rates. In 1990, over 50 per cent of the female population was under 25 years of age. This proportion is similar in the case of males; however, since Venezuelan women reflect the world-wide tendency of living longer, women aged 55 years or over outnumber men in that age group.

13. With regard to trends in marital status, there has been a fall in the proportion of unmarried women; in 1978 they made up 49.6 per cent and in 1989 38.1 per cent; accordingly, the percentages of married and cohabiting women have shown a slight increase, as have those of widowed and divorced women.

B. Political structure

14. Venezuela is one of the few countries in Latin America to have had a democracy for over 30 years.

15. In the 1961 Constitution, Venezuela is defined as a presidential federal republic composed of 22 states, the Federal District, and 72 islands (federal dependencies). The Constitution establishes a weak separation of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, which, while permitting a division of functions, allows for the interlinkage of all three branches.

16. Executive authority rests with the President of the Republic, who is elected by universal suffrage for a term of five years, with no possibility of re-election. The President appoints and dismisses the ministers, has supreme command of the armed forces and directs the country's foreign policy.

17. Legislative authority is exercised by the National Congress, which comprises the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, whose members are elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. The Senate is made up of two representatives from each state, including the Federal District, plus members selected on the principle of proportional minority representation, and also the former Presidents. The Chamber of Deputies is made up of deputies, whose appointment is determined by law on the basis of required population numbers and proportional minority representation. In each state there is a Legislative Assembly.

18. Judicial power is exercised by the Supreme Court of Justice and the ordinary courts. There is a Council of the Judicature, which appoints the judges and exercises disciplinary authority over the courts.

19. The Venezuelan Constitution and new specialized laws are bringing about a gradual administrative decentralization, which is fostering the development of the various regions of the country. However, the fact that the capital of the Republic has traditionally been the power hub causes a focusing of activity and creates practical obstacles to the full attainment of the decentralization goals set out in the Constitution and in the laws concerning decentralization and transfer of jurisdiction. With a view to ensuring political decentralization, the Electoral Voting Act was partially reformed in 1989 in order to introduce a person-based election procedure for state governors, councillors and mayors. The President of the Republic reserves the right to appoint the governor of the Federal District.

20. This measure forms part of a process to strengthen democracy set out in a "Project for the comprehensive reform of the Venezuelan State", whose aim is to mobilize the forces of society through major changes in the political, administrative, legal, economic, social and cultural spheres in order to open up channels for the building of a modern, democratic and efficient State.

C. Socio-economic aspects

21. Following years of relative prosperity, the 1980s saw major economic changes in Venezuela, with negative repercussions in the social sphere. The adverse effects of unstable international oil prices, combined with the external crisis that began in 1982, gave rise to a series of shock decisions of an economic nature, which intensified and fuelled social unrest. Moreover, in meeting its external debt, Venezuela committed a sizeable portion of its financial resources but, in most cases, this did not ease the burden or create a more positive outlook for our country than that existing at the beginning of the decade.

22. In the period under review, many of the economies of the region's countries were marked by various imbalances, which became more pronounced and gave rise to crises during those years. It is not surprising that this has been called the "lost decade" in Latin America. Economies were unavoidably subjected to adjustment programmes with a view to re-establishing conditions for growth. These adjustments were difficult in all cases, and the experiments were not always successful. Much depended on an ability to contend with the restrictions of foreign borrowing and on the policies that could be implemented to deal with the social tensions associated with these processes.

23. As was to be expected in circumstances such as those described, some of the main indicators for measuring the degree of social development in our countries fell sharply.

24. In Venezuela, the economy between 1985 and 1994 was characterized by a decline, in real terms, in oil revenue, which gave rise to a fiscal crisis that has still not been resolved despite the introduction, in February 1989, of a major devaluation and a unified exchange rate to overcome the serious balance-of-payments crisis. This phenomenon threatened to recur between 1992 and 1994, and in fact did so in May 1994. It is important to stress the impact that fiscal revenues have.

25. The fall in oil revenue becomes more evident if account is taken of per capita income levels (receipts in 1993 constant dollars), which are comparable only with those of the 1940s but with far different expectations in regard to future trends, since revenue from the petroleum industry is today stagnating in per capita terms and particularly in relation to the size of the economy.

26. This process has been referred to as the "exhaustion of the revenue development model of the Venezuelan economy".

27. One of the most serious consequences of this situation is the inflationary process that was set in motion, causing an ever greater deterioration in living conditions for most people and especially for women on low incomes and their family dependents. The increasingly uneven distribution of income, the expanding informal labour market and the decline in the country's security system are reinforcing this trend of a constantly increasing number of poor people and categories of poverty.

28. Venezuela is one of the Latin American countries whose pattern of income distribution has been consistently regressing, owing to the effects of inflation on food prices and generally on the cost of all major items of expenditure of the lower-income groups. The effects of inflation have been felt more strongly in the poorer strata than in the higher-income sectors, which has given rise to social tensions, whose most dramatic expressions were seen in February 1989 and during 1992 and 1993. As a result, investment came to a standstill during the period of instability.

29. The percentage breakdown of the active labour force between the formal and informal sectors of the economy has evolved as follows:

	Total		Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Absolute	Percentage	Absolute	Percentage	Absolute	Percentage
1986	5 477 787	100	3 202 827	58.5	2 274 960	41.5
1987	5 785 502	100	3 547 092	61.3	2 238 310	38.7
1988	6 116 605	100	3 783 830	61.9	2 328 775	38.1
1989	6 113 601	100	3 689 252	60.3	2 424 349	39.7
1990	6 354 555	100	3 697 639	58.2	2 706 317	41.8
1991	6 769 251	100	4 025 954	59.5	2 743 297	40.5
1992	7 003 868	100	4 228 244	60.4	2 775 624	39.6

Source: Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV), *Statistical Yearbook, Labour Market and Prices*, 1990 and 1992, pp. 98 and 104.

30. Despite the efforts made by the Government through increased public spending, there has been a decline in public-sector employment, affecting working women in particular; the public sector has traditionally been an employer of women, especially in the professional, specialist and managerial grades.

31. The social process that took place during these years has been highlighted in a variety of studies conducted on poverty in the developing countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. The acceptance of the phenomenon of poverty and its consequences in the population groups affected has been at the centre of debate on the Latin American social situation in the present decade. This is not a new trait in our societies; what is new is the sharp increase in the number of inhabitants who find themselves in this situation and the continuing deterioration in their standard of living. That decline is closely linked to the reduction in per capita public spending on social programmes. This has conspired not only against the expansion of the public services dealing with health and educational needs, but also against the maintenance of appropriate levels of care provided by the existing services.

32. Venezuela is no exception. It could even be said to be a clear example of the transformation of a country of prosperity into one of adversity. Venezuela is now a "rich-poor" country: rich in natural resources and rich in human resources – mostly young people with the capacity for personal and professional development – but poor through the effects of an inappropriate economic policy and the continual deferment of the necessary adjustments to that policy, which has led to a situation where half the population of Venezuela lives in poverty.

33. The adjustment programme was primarily designed to rectify the balance-of-payments situation and achieve zero inflation in aggregate demand, but has resulted in deteriorating living conditions of poor households, particularly those of working-class women, i.e. the social group exposed to the greatest risks of destitution. In this connection, poverty manifests itself in all areas of development of the country's inhabitants, being characterized by their exclusion from markets in goods and services and from access to financial resources for the development of productive activities, technologies and mechanisms for participating in decision-making.

34. The effects of all these factors are even more striking in regard to women, who are assuming greater responsibilities and thereby becoming the principal supporters of households, particularly lower-income families, contributing directly to the survival of more than one third of the whole populations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Set out below are a number of general indicators that illustrate the situation in Venezuela.

Table 1. Socio-economic indicators

	Totals and averages
Total population:	19 786 504
Population living in poverty:	68.1 per cent (13 474 609 inhabitants)
Families living in poverty:	63.3 per cent
Number of household members:	5.02
Number of households living in poverty	2 684 185

Source: Agroplan, January-June 1991, Caracas.

35. National and international organizations that study poverty point out that this is the biggest and most serious problem in present-day Venezuela. In this connection, according to the "poverty line" method of calculation, more than two thirds of households (65.8 per cent) are poor; for the first half of 1993, the figure reached 66.2 per cent, critical poverty standing at 30.3 per cent. The estimated figures produced by the study conducted under the Venezuela-Fundacredesa project for 1981, 1988 and 1990 also indicate high poverty levels, at around 80 per cent, in strata IV and V. The findings of another study, showing trends in the percentages of households in extreme poverty and of all poor households, are given below.

Table 2. Trends in percentages of households in extreme poverty and total poor households

Second half-year	Extreme poverty	Total poor households
1984	11	36
1985	16	46
1986	23	52
1987	16	47
1988	14	46
1989	30	62
1990	33	67
1991	34	67
1992	28	62

Source: Agroplan, based on OCEI data and the cost of the standard food basket and goods and services, 1993.

36. Table 2 confirms the seriousness of the problem we are facing. The decrease that occurred between 1991 and 1992 is explained by the fact that for this study the income of poor households has been increased by the amount received by them under social programmes, which has been treated as a monthly allowance (Bs 1,700 per recipient family in 1991). For the purposes of the study, this meant, in the case of families living at the upper limit of extreme poverty, an increase of 16 per cent in their income, while, for families living at the upper limit of critical poverty, the allowances represented an 8-per-cent increase in their income. The resulting effect on incomes has enabled many families to rise above the extreme poverty line and enter the critical poverty category. The various studies carried out in the country generally do not reveal changes in the magnitude of the situation; they reflect rather the methodological approach to the problem. With regard to the poverty breakdown between urban and rural areas, the Economic and Social Research Institute at the Central University of Venezuela has produced figures showing trends in the total number of poor households and those living in extreme poverty between 1988 and 1990.

Table 3. Trends in overall poverty and extreme poverty by urban and rural area (in percentages) (1988-1990)

	Overall poverty			Extreme poverty		
Period	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
1988	55.2	51.4	72.9	15.0	12.3	25.6
First half 1989	65.1	62.5	78.1	30.1	26.9	46.1
Second half 1989	67.2	65.2	77.7	30.3	27.7	44.1
First half 1990	66.4	64.2	78.4	30.9	28.5	43.7
Second half 1990	65.8	63.4	78.8	32.0	29.3	46.7

Source: Economic and Social Research Institute, Central University of Venezuela, 1991.

37. The urban population of Venezuela can be seen to have steadily increased. For 1991, it is estimated that the number of urban dwellers reached 35 per cent of the total population and that the percentage of poor people in urban areas compared with the total rose from 63.4 to 77.0 per cent. Venezuela's poverty has accordingly been defined as an essentially urban phenomenon. However, the incidence of poverty is more accentuated in rural areas, where three quarters of the population live in poverty.

38. The situation described above is closely linked to factors such as illiteracy and inadequate standards of health. At the same time, the decline in employment and the increase in food prices and the cost of basic services have caused a significant deterioration in the socio-economic circumstances of the population.

39. The Government's areas of social action depend on the scope of the problems and how they are tackled through social policies. Accordingly, any such policies have either a welfare bias, where the beneficiaries are merely passive recipients of programmes or services, or a promotional bias, where the beneficiaries are active participants in shaping the nature and course of social development.

40. In general terms, social spending is one of the factors that explain the changes occurring in income and poverty levels. Within this context, traditional programmes focusing on education and health constituted the core of such expenditure.

41. Since 1989, the scope of social spending has included a series of benefit programmes under which allowances are paid directly to the most vulnerable population groups with a view to avoiding permanent harm to them.

42. A recent analysis conducted by Dr. Gustavo Marquez in this connection points out that Venezuela has not slackened its efforts in regard to social spending and that the budgetary reductions in that area are similar to those in other sectors. Hence, the burden of the adjustment of the fiscal budget has not fallen disproportionately on the social sector. It was also stated that there is relative stability, as compared with the pattern of growth prior to 1974, social spending having risen from 22 per cent of the primary budget in 1962 to 35 per cent in 1973. Also, the constant ratio of social spending meant in practice a reduction in per capita expenditure in absolute terms during that time.

43. Social spending was increased until 1980 and reduced in the period to 1989. Since that year it has been rising. The upsurge observed in 1990 was due to the expansion of the new benefit programmes.

44. An analysis of the budgetary allocations for the traditional programmes (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health) shows an increase under the support, planning and administration programme as a result of higher appropriations for personnel, to the detriment of reduced allocations for inputs and operational programmes directly connected with the attainment of the institutions' targets.

45. These factors led to inefficient government agencies and a deterioration in services.

46. Faced with this situation, the Government decided in 1989 to introduce programmes outside the traditional institutions, with a view to mitigating the "social cost of the adjustment". Thus, a social policy was put in place in the form of a "Plan to combat poverty", which, for implementation purposes, incorporates the existing social welfare networks, in both the governmental and non-governmental spheres, and encompasses a series of programmes ranging from direct allowances for families with children of school age to a special system of medical care and food provision for pregnant women and nursing mothers, as well as the introduction of an unemployment insurance scheme.

47. Compensatory measures – by definition – are only a means of mitigating the effects caused by economic mismanagement. Development as such does not exist within such a concept; at the very most it is merely a spin-off of economic action.

48. Notwithstanding the achievements of this ad hoc plan, it can be seen that there has been:

(a) An incomplete view of poverty and – within it – of the situation of women living in poverty;

(b) A lack of a comprehensive social policy directed at women, not merely as mothers or heads of households;

(c) A disregard for aspects of training and skills development aimed at achieving higher literacy rates and standards of proficiency in non-traditional areas of women's occupations;

(d) An absence of programmes to develop women's self-esteem as a tool for their personal, employment and social advancement.

III. HISTORICAL RECORD OF DEVELOPMENTS IN WOMEN'S STATUS IN VENEZUELA

49. The progress achieved by women in Venezuela dates back to the 1940s, and specifically to 1942, when the first reform of the Civil Code was introduced, granting Venezuelan women citizenship, which had hitherto been denied them under the country's legal system.

50. In 1946, the presence of women in political life received a boost with the establishment of women's right to vote. In that year also, 15 women won seats in the Constituent Assembly, as deputies.

51. A period of transition from a national regime to a democratic regime began in 1958. The 1961 Constitution established equality and greater opportunities for access to the educational system, thus contributing towards the steadily increasing participation of Venezuelan women in the decision-making process.

52. In 1964 the first woman minister of State was appointed, to head the Ministry of Development. Since that time, women – albeit in a minority – have always served in the executive.

53. Women's representation has also been increasing in other government posts, for example in the judiciary. Their advancement in the legislative has been slower, owing to the political parties' reluctance to accept women within their internal structures, particularly in the party leadership. A similar situation has occurred in the trade unions.

54. Since 1974, women's involvement and advancement in high-level public affairs have gained headway, especially with the establishment of the first Women's Advisory Commission to the Office of the President. This Commission organized the First Venezuelan Women's Congress.

55. In 1979, the new Government appointed a woman minister of State with responsibility for women's participation in development, who put before Congress the proposals for the reform of the Civil Code.

56. The year 1984 saw the creation of the National Office for Women's Affairs, which is attached to the Sectoral Office for the Family within the Ministry for Youth. Also in that year, the establishment of the women's advisory commissions began.

57. In 1987, the Ministry for Youth became the Ministry of the Family, and the Sectoral Office for the Advancement of Women was set up as the principal government agency responsible for developing programmes and projects aimed at increasing the effective participation of women in the socio-economic, cultural and political fields and promoting their social and political rights.

58. In 1989, a woman Minister for the Advancement of Women was appointed with the tasks of coordinating and implementing programmes designed to promote women's participation in all spheres.

59. Subsequently, in December 1990, the Employment Organization Act was passed. This law, which came into force on 1 May 1991, has greatly improved the situation of women in the sphere of work. Also in that year, the Second Venezuelan Women's Congress was held, the most important of its results being the approval of the National Women's Council (CONAMU) under Decree No. 2722 published in the Official Gazette of 30 December. The objective of this institution is to contribute to the achievement of full de facto and *de jure* equality between Venezuelan men and women in conformity with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

60. In September 1993, the Equal Opportunities for Women Act was promulgated, providing for the establishment of the National Women's Institute.

61. At the twenty-fourth regular session of the Organization of American States, held at Belem Do Para, Brazil, in June 1994, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women was adopted. This constitutes a positive step towards protecting women's rights and eliminating situations of violence to which they may be subject.

62. It should be pointed out that this Convention had been proposed by Venezuela with a view to establishing an international legal instrument aimed at rectifying the serious situation of physical abuse, of which there are countless female victims in the American continent.

IV. NATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

National Women's Council

63. The national organization responsible for ensuring women's de facto and *de jure* equality is the National Women's Council (CONAMU). It was set up as a standing presidential commission under Decree No. 2722 of 22 December 1992.

64. The current composition of the CONAMU executive board is as follows:

President:	María Bello de Guzmán
Consultative Committee:	Ismenia de Villalba Argelia Laya Elia Borges de Tapia Nora Castañeda (non-governmental organizations (NGOs))
Executive secretary:	Miriam Romero
Director of international relations:	Carmen Teresa Martínez
Director responsible for women's homes:	Ligia Toro Salom
Ministries represented:	Ministry of Justice Ministry of Education Ministry of the Family Ministry of Labour Ministry of Health
Advisory commissions:	Women and health Women and legislation Women, economic affairs and labour Rural and indigenous women Women and education Women, training and leadership Women, participation and community organization Women and social development Women and communication Women and the environment

65. To pursue its objective, the National Women's Council has the following duties and functions:

(a) Steering the formulation and execution of public policies and sectoral plans in all institutions of government towards the promotion of de facto and *de jure* gender equality;

(b) Investigating situations where discrimination against women is in evidence, and formulating recommendations and/or suggesting appropriate procedures for its elimination;

(c) Proposing necessary legislation to ensure the implementation of the constitutional principle of equality between the sexes and the elimination of discrimination;

(d) Cooperating with the agencies of the central and decentralized government authorities in relevant action undertaken by them to eliminate discrimination against women;

(e) Promoting appropriate training and awareness mechanisms with a view to the reinforcement, among all members of society, of attitudes and conduct based on mutual esteem, equal treatment and enhancement of the status of men and women within our society;

(f) Encouraging and fostering the development of scientific knowledge, systematized information and literary and artistic expressions that will promote or contribute to the attainment of full de facto and *de jure* equality between men and women;

(g) Assisting public-sector organizations in obtaining the financial resources required for the execution of gender policies and relevant programmes, and cooperating in coordinating the allocation of those resources to organizations and programmes requiring them;

(h) Promoting, among public-sector organizations, the improved provision of necessary services to women in the legal, socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-domestic spheres that are required for the discharge of their responsibilities;

(i) Any duties or functions that may be assigned by law.

"The management and administration of the National Women's Council shall be under the direction of a president, who shall be advised by a Consultative Committee. In performing his or her functions, the president shall be assisted by an executive secretary.

"The Consultative Committee shall additionally be composed of the Minister for the Family, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and the Minister of Justice, as well as three members appointed by the President of the Republic from among persons who have distinguished themselves by their work in support of non-governmental women's organizations.

"Activities undertaken within the agencies of the government authorities in connection with the advancement of women, the improvement of their living conditions and the full attainment of de facto and *de jure* equality shall take into account the guidelines and strategies formulated by the National Women's Council."

Policy

66. The national Government's policy towards women is incorporated in the guiding principles set out in the Eighth National Plan and the proposals contained in the specifications of the national programme for women with a gender perspective.

67. The policies, and the activities involved in their execution, are part of a trend towards cooperation and integration at the national as well as the regional, Latin American and Andean subregional levels.

68. For the purpose of implementing the gender-oriented guidelines, policy approaches are being formulated to address practical and strategic needs.

Programmes

69. For the execution of projects and programmes, CONAMU has subdivided its operations in order to cover the different areas affecting women. For this purpose, working committees have been set up for each of these areas with the task of devising proposals, plans and programmes of action for execution through the decentralized operational units at the federal and municipal levels with a view to dealing with situations and problems that are specific to each sector.

Strengthening of civic groups

70. With the aim of coordinating and strengthening the work of civic groups, CONAMU cooperates with women's NGOs, which number some 120 nationwide. Also, the following seven national networks have been set up to deal with specific sectors and areas:

- Women and the environment network;
- Network to combat sexual and domestic violence;
- Rural and indigenous women's support network;
- Network of female labour union and trade association leaders;
- Venezuelan network of women's comprehensive care centres, agencies and homes;
- Venezuelan university network for women's studies (REUVEN);
- United women leaders' movement.

Agreements

71. The National Women's Council has, in line with its policies, projects and programmes, concluded technical cooperation agreements with multilateral international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Organization of American States, the International Labour Organization, the Pan-American Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, and also with national organizations including the Central University of Venezuela, the Simón Bolívar University, the Venezuelan Association for Alternative Sexuality (AVESA), the Centre for Social Research, Training and Studies on Women's Issues (CISFEM), the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for the Family. Others are being planned.

V. APPLICATION OF THE ARTICLES OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

A. Advancement of women

Legislative measures aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and at promoting their advancement

Venezuelan legal framework

72. The substantive law prevailing in Venezuela contains no provisions of a discriminatory nature against women in the exercise of political rights that prevent them from taking an active role in government, provided that they satisfy the established admission conditions, as are required of any citizen.

73. The Constitution and the strengthening of the democratic system have made it possible to give expression to the principle of equality and liberty with regard to civil rights for women.

74. The Constitution in force since 1961 lays down, in its article 61, the principle of political, social and juridical equality of Venezuelans without distinction on the grounds of race, sex, creed or social status:

"**Article 61**

"No discrimination based on race, sex, creed or social status shall be permitted.

"Identification papers for purposes of acts of civilian life shall contain no indication denoting filiation.

"No official title shall be given other than that of citizen and the polite form of address, with the exception of diplomatic titles.

"No titles of nobility or hereditary distinctions shall be recognized.

"Men and women shall, without distinction, be eligible to elect and be elected to public office.

"Life, liberty, the right to a fair trial and other fundamental rights shall have the same protection irrespective of the sex or marital status of the person concerned."

75. On 26 July 1982, a reform of the Civil Code based on the concept of equal family responsibilities was approved, with the aim of imbuing the family, as the basic unit of society, with a greater sense of economic, moral, social and legal solidarity, thus leading to increased stability, since marital relationships with predominantly male rights and privileges are inconsistent with the existing social reality. In this regard, article 137 of the Civil Code stipulates: "Upon marriage, the husband and wife shall acquire the same rights and assume the same obligations", and various provisions are laid down to regulate this principle and the actual exercise of these new rights for women.

76. The partial reform of the Civil Code established situations of equality between couples:

(a) **Equality of the spouses before the law**. In addition to the acquisition of the same rights and duties, the matrimonial home is fixed and changed by common consent:

"**Article 140**

"The spouses shall, by mutual agreement, take decisions relating to family life and determine the marital home."

"**Article 137**

"Upon marriage, the husband and wife shall acquire the same rights and shall assume the same obligations. Matrimony shall impose upon the spouses the obligation to live together, to remain faithful to each other and to provide mutual support.

"A married woman may use her husband's family name. This right shall continue even after dissolution of the marriage by reason of death, unless and until she remarries.

"The refusal of a married woman to use her husband's family name shall in no circumstances be deemed non-compliance with the obligations imposed by law as a consequence of matrimony.

"Furthermore, property acquired during marriage shall form part of the joint marital estate. The sale or mortgage of such property shall require the agreement of both spouses."

"Article 168

"Either spouse may alone administer the common property acquired by means of his or her personal labour or through any other legitimate title; the judicial certification of acts relating thereto shall fall to the spouse having performed such acts. The consent of both spouses shall be required for the disposal – whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration – or the encumbrance of property acquired through matrimony in the case of real estate, goods and chattels or rights subject to public procedure, corporate stocks, bonds and shares, business assets and contributions to partnership capital. In such cases, the judicial certification of the acts concerned shall fall to both spouses jointly.

"The judge may authorize either spouse to perform alone, in respect of common property, any act whose validity requires the consent of the other spouse, if the latter is unable to indicate his or her intent and provided that the interests of the marriage and of the family so demand. The judge may further agree that an act shall be performed by one of the spouses if the refusal of the other is unjustified and provided that the same marital and family interests so require. In such cases, the judge shall decide in the full knowledge of the facts and following a hearing attended by the other spouse, unless the latter is unable to do so, and taking into account the intended investment of the assets arising out of such acts."

(b) Equality of parents *vis-à-vis* their children in law. Parental authority is to be administered jointly by the father and the mother. The exercise of parental authority will continue after dissolution of the marriage and also applies to children born out of wedlock:

"Article 192

"If a divorce or judicial separation has been based on any of the grounds provided for in subsections 4, 5 or 6 of article 185, the spouse whose action gave rise thereto shall be subject to withdrawal of parental authority over his or her under age children. In such cases, parental authority shall be exercised solely by the other parent. If that parent is prevented from exercising parental authority or has also had such authority withdrawn, the judge shall make a guardianship order.

"In all other cases, a judgement of divorce or judicial separation shall not give rise to withdrawal of parental authority. The judge pronouncing the verdict of divorce or judicial separation shall, in the interests of the child, decide upon the awarding of custody to either parent, at the place of residence fixed by the latter, and may also award custody to third parties who are fit to administer such custody.

"Custody of children below the age of seven years shall be administered by the mother unless, for cogent reasons, the competent judge rules otherwise. The spouse to whom custody has not been awarded shall retain all other rights inherent in parental authority and shall exercise them jointly with the other spouse. The judge shall, in the final ruling, decide upon the arrangements for visits by the parent to whom custody or parental authority has not been granted and also upon the amount of the maintenance allowance to be provided by that parent for the children, and shall ensure payment thereof by such measures provided for by law as he deems appropriate."

"Article 234

"If filiation has been established, a child conceived and born out of wedlock shall have the same status, in relation to its father and mother and to their relatives by blood, as a child born or conceived in marriage."

Draft legislation

77. The Penal Code Reform Bill submitted to the National Congress with a view to adoption is currently pending.

78. It should be pointed out that this Bill was initiated by a group of women in 1985, through the Sectoral Office for the Advancement of Women within the Ministry of the Family and various non-governmental organizations. It incorporates a number of observations and sets forth a series of proposals aimed at:

(a) Amending the classification of "offences against morality and family probity" to "offences against the person", since those designations are regarded as incompatible with the concepts of equality and equity;

(b) Penalizing domestic violence between couples. The Bill also proposes the elimination of adultery as a criminal offence and the elimination of the mitigating circumstances based on honour and rape of prostitutes, which are not provided for in the current Penal Code;

(c) A Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill has also been put before Congress; this innovative and necessary law is aimed essentially at preventing and dealing with situations involving sexual or domestic violence.

Special measures to achieve equality between men and women

Employment Organization Act

79. The new Employment Organization Act was published on 20 December 1990 and entered into force on 1 May 1991. This law lays down innovative provisions for the protection of maternity.

80. Venezuelan women had requested that the protections aimed specifically at them and those concerned with night work of women be eliminated and that such protections should focus rather on maternity and the family. This objective was achieved with the reform of chapter VI of the Employment Organization Act, the heading of the chapter being changed from "Protection for women" to "Protection of maternity and the family" (title VI).

"Article 379

"Female workers shall enjoy all the rights that this law and its regulations guarantee to workers in general, and they may not be the subject of any differences with regard to remuneration or other conditions of employment.

"The foregoing shall not apply to rules specifically laid down for the protection of women in connection with their family life, health, pregnancy and maternity."

81. **Antenatal and postnatal periods.** Maternity leave in respect of the postnatal period is now fixed at 12 weeks and may not be forfeited; if the birth occurs after the anticipated date, the leave is extended up to the time of birth and the period may not be reduced.

"Article 385

"Pregnant workers shall be entitled to six weeks' leave prior to confinement and 12 weeks' leave thereafter or a longer period of leave by reason of sickness which, according to expert medical opinion, is a consequence of the pregnancy or delivery and renders the mother unfit for work.

"In such cases, the mother shall retain her right to work and to an allowance for her own and the child's maintenance, in accordance with the provisions laid down by the social security authorities."

82. **Adoptive mothers**. A working woman who adopts a child is eligible for maternity leave for a period of two months calculated from the time when the child is handed over.

"Article 387

"A female worker allowed to adopt a child of less than three years shall be entitled to maternity leave for a maximum period of ten weeks calculated from the date when the foster family placement authorized by the National Children's Institute is effected with a view to the adoption of the child.

"In addition to retaining her right to employment, the adoptive mother shall also receive an allowance for her own and the child's maintenance."

83. **Rights of nursing mothers**. Nursing mothers are allowed two 30-minute breaks per day to breast-feed their children in their employer's day nursery. If there is no day nursery, the break is extended to one hour in each case.

"Article 393

"During lactation, a woman shall be entitled to two 30-minute breaks per day in order to breast-feed her child in the day nursery provided.

"If there is no day nursery, the duration of the breaks allowed under this article shall be one hour in each case."

84. **Employment stability in cases of pregnancy**

"Article 382

"A pregnant worker shall be exempted from performing tasks which, because they require considerable physical exertion or for other reasons, may cause a miscarriage or impede the normal development of the foetus, and any refusal by the worker shall not affect her conditions of employment."

Also, a pregnant worker may not be transferred from her place of employment, and may not be dismissed either during her pregnancy or for a period of one year after giving birth.

"Article 383

"Pregnant workers may not be transferred from their place of employment unless such measure is required for reasons of service and is not harmful to their condition of pregnancy; nor may they suffer any reduction in wages or deterioration in conditions by reason thereof."

"Article 384

"Pregnant workers shall enjoy protection against dismissal during their pregnancy and for up to one year following confinement. Should any of the grounds for dismissal laid down in article 102 of this law arise, a prior assessment by the labour inspector shall be required, in conformity with the procedure laid down in chapter II of title VII."

85. **Establishment of day-care facilities**. For the purpose of regulating employers' methods of compliance with their obligation concerning the comprehensive care of their employees' children, Decree No. 2506 of 26 August 1992 provides as follows:

"Article 391

"An employer with a workforce of over 20 persons shall maintain a day nursery where employees may leave their children during working hours. Such day nurseries shall have suitable specialist personnel. The regulations issued under this law or special ministerial orders shall lay down the minimum conditions for setting up day nurseries and shall contain the necessary guidelines to ensure that such facilities fulfil the purposes for which they were established."

86. The above-mentioned Decree provides for several alternative ways of complying with its provisions, i.e.:

(a) Establishment of a day nursery;

(b) Installation of a day nursery that is shared with other nearby employers:

(i) By payment of the enrolment fee and monthly instalments in respect of a day nursery authorized by the National Children's Institute in the vicinity of the employee's place of residence;

(ii) By payment of fees for day-care centres, group facilities or pre-school centres or mothercraft centres operated by the Children's Foundation;

(c) It is also stipulated that any institutional arrangement is acceptable provided that it is authorized by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of the Family under a special ministerial order, following consultation with the Supervisory Board for Comprehensive Care of Employees' Children.

Equal Opportunities for Women Act

87. The purpose of this law, which was passed in August 1993, is to guarantee to women the full exercise of their rights and to establish the Independent Women's Institute, which possesses separate legal status, its own assets and standing bodies dealing with the formulation, execution, discussion, coordination, supervision and evaluation of policies and issues relating to the status and situation of women. The Act also provides for the institution of the National Office for the Defence of Women's Rights, with responsibility for ensuring observance and awareness of the laws and for providing free legal aid in the defence of such rights.

Organization of Magistrates' Courts and Related Procedures Act

88. This instrument, which was given legal effect in August 1993, stipulates that justices of the peace shall, on the basis of conventional wisdom and equity, resolve, *inter alia*, domestic disputes in such matters as alimony, physical abuse in disciplining, violence, maltreatment within the family and disagreements with neighbours.

Ministry of Justice Order No. 402, dated 17 December 1993

89. This ministerial order authorizes and regulates conjugal visits in respect of women internees.

B. Social and cultural patterns

90. With regard to cultural patterns and stereotyped roles, it can be seen that the main socializing agencies, namely the family, school and the media, transmit and tend to perpetuate traditional female stereotypes in one form or another.

91. The transmission of stereotyped roles varies depending on factors such as the mother's employment and social class. According to research carried out, the fact that a mother works does not necessarily lead to less traditional attitudes concerning sexual roles.

92. With regard to schools, the virtual absence of men in pre-school and primary education exerts an influence, as does the content of all school textbooks, which portray women engaged solely in household work, while male characters are shown performing leading roles in public life.

93. Furthermore, the media in many instances regularly present a distorted image of Venezuelan women, which does not correspond with the present-day situation.

94. Finally, it may be stated that there are no effective measures aimed at eliminating social and cultural patterns; on the contrary, the female stereotyping perpetuated by the socializing agencies has become more rigid in comparison with the flexibility that the reality of Venezuelan life affords individuals of both sexes.

95. Violence in society is a question of perspectives.[1] Violence, in its multiplicity of forms, manifestations, perpetrators, victims and settings, constitutes one of the most disturbing facts of present-day life.[2] This structural problem affecting societies is the result of individuals' deteriorating living conditions caused by economic, political, social and moral crises, which prevent an equitable distribution of national income.

96. Continuing failure to meet needs and a lack of opportunities for access to education, health care, personal security, employment and recreation, give rise to levels of aggressiveness in the individual.

1. Violence

97. Added to these factors are corruption and the ineffectiveness of laws and the administration of justice, which not only undermine the stability of the political system but also harm the social order and family relationships, particularly in regard to women.

98. Violence against women in the various spheres of society is the product of power relationships in which women occupy an inferior position.

99. There are various types of violence against women, which can manifest themselves in different forms.

Violence at the workplace

100. This can appear as any kind of unwanted sexual advance, such as the seeking of sexual favours or any other verbal or physical conduct which is offensive to the person concerned. In such situations, women feel unprotected from an employment and legal viewpoint, through fear of losing their job or of being subjected to examination in the course of which their behaviour may be called into question.

Violence in institutions

101. Women prisoners are exposed to a number of discriminatory situations, such as maltreatment, solitary confinement, disrespect, degrading interrogation, unhygienic living conditions, overcrowding and poor diet.

Violence in the home

102. This type of violence is the most widespread and affects the majority of women regardless of race, age, education and socio-economic circumstances. It takes place in the home and has been termed "domestic violence" or "violence within the family".

103. Such violence has been defined as "an act committed within the family by one of its members which seriously jeopardizes the life, physical or psychological well-being or freedom of another member of the family". All statistics show women as the main victims, although children and older persons are also affected.[3]

104. In Venezuela, non-governmental organizations have encouraged discussion and alerted the attention of the government authorities to the topic of domestic violence. The importance currently given to this issue by public institutions and community-based organizations demonstrates the need to combat this problem confronting Venezuelan households and society.

105. In Venezuela a number of civic bodies are studying and dealing with the issues of domestic and sexual violence. They are:

(a) The Venezuelan Association for Alternative Sexuality (AVESA);

(b) The "Juana Ramírez la Avanzadora" Women's Home of Maracay;

(c) The "Manuelita Saenz" Chair in Women's Studies.

106. From the juridical viewpoint, Venezuela's legal system incorporates provisions relating to respect for family unity and consideration towards family members.

107. The Constitution establishes the family's right to education, security, public health and welfare. In various forms, the Civil Code, the Guardianship Act and the Penal Code, among other legal instruments, penalize persons guilty of physical abuse.[4]

108. There is, however, a need for a law to protect women from violence. The Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill is a necessary legislative instrument, whose main purpose is to prevent and deal with the various kinds of violence to which women are subject and which harm family unity and stability and the social order.

109. It may be concluded that violence represents a threat to public safety and perpetuates a situation of inequality and discrimination between the country's men and women.

2. Prostitution

110. Prostitution is understood to mean sexual commerce for reward. In its most typical forms, prostitution constitutes social discrimination against women.

111. In Venezuela, the existing legal regime defines prostitution as an offence.

112. The Venezuelan Penal Code, in chapter III, establishes penalties and categories of offences relating to corruption of morals, as follows.

(a) Incitement to prostitution:

"Article 388

"Any person who, in satisfying the desires of another, incites an under age person to prostitution or to acts of corruption of the morals shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of between three and eighteen months.

"The term of imprisonment shall be between one and four years if the offence was committed:

"(1) Against a person under the age of 12 years;

"(2) By means of fraud or deceit;

"(3) By relatives by marriage or blood in the direct ascending line, by the adoptive father or mother, by the husband, by the legal guardian or by any other person entrusted with the care, upbringing, supervision or wardship of the child, even if temporarily.

"Any person who, repeatedly or with a view to profit and for the purpose of satisfying the desires of another, aids, abets or facilitates the prostitution or corruption of the morals of any individual shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of between one and six months."

(b) Aiding of prostitution:

Article 389

This article stipulates that "any person who, with a view to satisfying of the desires of another, aids or facilitates the prostitution or corruption of the morals of a minor shall be punished".

113. In connection with prostitution, under the planned reform of the Penal Code relating to the section entitled "Offences against morality and family probity", it is proposed that this designation be amended to "Offences against the person", in view of its obsolescence and juridical inconsistency within the context of equality and equity.

114. Prostitution has now become a widespread and acute problem in Venezuelan society as a result of economic and social factors, and it also constitutes a public health risk.

C. Participation of women in political and public life

115. From the legal standpoint, there are no obstacles to women's involvement in political life.

116. Venezuelan women have fully appreciated the significance of democratic participation and are thus continually striving to involve themselves in all activities concerned with daily affairs, despite the realization that they are the subject of discrimination. The situation to date nevertheless demonstrates how difficult it is for them to secure prominent political, trade-union, administrative and representative posts.

117. Comparative tables showing achievements in this area provide figures that clearly reveal the differences in the levels attained by men and women.

Women's participation in parliamentary assemblies

118. According to data supplied by the Supreme Electoral Council, women's representation at the 1983 and 1988 elections shows a rising trend. However, for 1993 the figures relating to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate indicate falls of 2.9 and 2 per cent respectively.

Women's participation in central government

119. At the ministerial level, including the post of secretary of State, women's representation is minimal, their highest participation being two cabinet posts out of a maximum of 24 members.

Women's participation in regional and local government

120. With regard to the legislative assemblies, women have maintained a rising trend of participation, although the margin between 1988 and 1993 can be regarded as small.

121. The situation is similar in the municipal councils. Between 1988 and 1993, women's representation increased by 3.6 per cent. However, it should be pointed out that, in relation to 1984, the number of women councillors has fallen by 5.1 per cent.

122. With regard to the number of women mayors elected, there was a 2.2-per-cent fall between 1989 and 1992. The situation is even more critical in the case of female state governors, since only one female governor had been appointed prior to 1989, and in 1993 one woman held such a post.

Women's participation in the judiciary

123. It is in this area that women's representation in decision-making positions is most significant, primarily in the post of judge, where it has remained above 50 per cent between 1989 and 1993.

Women's participation in trade unions

124. Generally speaking, the presence of women in the trade-union movement has been exceptional.

125. There are four trade-union confederations: the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV), which has the highest membership, the Unitarian Confederation of Workers (CUTV), the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) and the Confederation of Independent Workers (CODESA).

126. Regarding the participation of women in these confederations, their presence within the CTV is somewhat higher in the regional federations than in the Executive Committee; however, only one regional federation is headed by a woman. This Confederation recently set up a Department for Women and the Family, which is beginning to discuss female leadership.

127. Also, training courses have been initiated at the Institute of Trade Union Studies (INAESIN) for women serving on trade-union executive bodies.

Community associations

128. The participation of women in community associations is high. Many such associations are chaired by women, although no gender-disaggregated records exist. The Federation of Urban Community Associations (FACUR) reported 180 associations in Caracas and in the metropolitan area in 1990. A study conducted in 1985 on a sample of 15 associations showed that female membership exceeded 60 per cent in one third of them, 50 per cent in another third and 40 per cent in one fifth of them.

129. Finally, it should be noted that, despite the increase in the number of Venezuelan women active in the public and political spheres, pursuing higher levels of study or involved in trade-union and community affairs, these efforts are not reflected in the positions achieved by women, in view of the serious restrictions confronting them.

Women's participation in the international sphere

130. With regard to women's participation in the foreign service, the situation is similar to other areas of the public administration. Women outnumber men in the intermediate and lower-level posts but have a limited presence in the more senior positions.

131. In the consular service their presence is significant but not as marked as in the diplomatic service.

132. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there are specialist posts serving the embassies abroad, including those of commercial, press, labour and cultural attaché, among others. The hierarchical composition of such posts conforms to the ranks within the diplomatic service.

133. At the present time, the exact number of women holding senior posts abroad is not available.

D. Nationality

134. Although the Constitution and the Civil Code establish the same rights for both men and women with regard to nationality, there is one difference. A Venezuelan man who marries a foreigner may confer Venezuelan nationality on her if she so desires.

> **"Article 37**
>
> "The following persons shall be Venezuelan by naturalization subject to a declaration of their wish to that effect:
>
> "(1) A female alien married to a Venezuelan male;
>
> "(2) Aliens under full age at the time of naturalization of the person exercising parental authority over them, if they are resident in the territory of the Republic and make the declaration before reaching the age of 25 years; and
>
> "(3) Aliens under full age who are adopted by Venezuelans, if they are resident in the territory of the Republic and make the declaration before reaching the age of 25 years."

135. A Venezuelan woman who marries a foreigner does not possess the right to confer her nationality on her husband, even if he so desires. In this respect, there is inequality of rights.

E. Education

136. The female education situation has shown significant advances in recent decades, both in general terms and in comparison with the male population.

137. These advances relate to improved educational standards of the population arising from greater access to primary-level schooling, the extension of compulsory education to nine years, the expansion of secondary education and the diversification of higher education.

138. The State has played an important role as the main provider of education, supplying over 80 per cent of all educational services. However, the participation of the private sector has increased in recent years, at the secondary rather than at the primary level, but also in pre-school education.

139. With regard to the comparative access of males and females to education, in general very few differences are apparent and in many respects none at all. The exception can be seen from the illiteracy figures. The 1990 census showed that, of the total illiterate working population, women accounted for 57.18 per cent and men 42.82 per cent.

140. The results of the occupational survey for the first half of 1993 revealed that 57.10 per cent of illiterates were women.

141. Even though female illiteracy rates have fallen, they continue to exceed the illiteracy rates for males. It should be pointed out that the rate is even higher in the age group from 45 to 54 years.

142. According to the 1990 census, the educational situation in regard to females of 10 years and over was as follows: illiterate and not studying at any level: 10.4 per cent; those studying in any year of primary education: 59.6 per cent; in any year of lower or upper secondary education or vocational training: 13.5 per cent; and in further education: 9.9 per cent.

143. With regard to enrolment, Ministry of Education figures indicate that the percentage distribution at the pre-school level between the school years 1980-1981 and 1986-1987 remained stable, being 50.3 per cent for boys and 49.7 per cent for girls. Regarding primary education (first to sixth grades), the details are as follows: for the school year 1980-1981, 50.7 per cent of enrolments corresponded to boys and 49.3 per cent to girls while, in the school year 1986-1987, 51.1 per cent corresponded to boys and 49.9 [*sic*] per cent to girls, which indicates a minimal fall in female enrolment. With regard to the statistics for lower secondary education (seventh to ninth grades), upper secondary education and vocational training, it was observed that, for the school year 1980-1981, the male/female split was 45.4/54.6 per cent while, for the school year 1986-1987, it was 45.6/54.4 per cent. However, it was noted that, in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, female enrolment had increased in comparison with male enrolment in regard to continuity of schooling. The source of all these latter statistics is the Ministry of Education's Sectoral Planning and Budgetary Office, Division of Statistics.

144. Concerning the position of women in higher education, the 1990 census revealed that 57.3 per cent of persons enrolling at educational establishments of that level were women. According to the same source, female graduates accounted for 48.9 per cent, and female students with any higher education grade but not holding a degree 53.3 per cent. Furthermore, the data obtained from the National Survey of Venezuelan Youth (ENJUVE), conducted by the Ministry of the Family in 1993, indicate a steady increase in young

women in education: 61.3 per cent. It was also apparent from the 1990 census that university courses in which women mainly enrolled and graduated were education and teacher training, law, medicine (pathology and psychiatry), business administration, accounting, economics, dentistry and bioanalysis. Women's participation in university courses in engineering is low. Finally in connection with this indicator, it should be pointed out that the female population pursuing higher education is a relatively young one, a high percentage of such students being between 15 and 44 years of age.

145. Regarding the indicator of completed studies, it was seen from the 1990 census that the urban female population constituted 51.18 per cent, and that 8.5 per cent attained the lower secondary level, 4.1 per cent the upper secondary or vocational training level, and 1.3 per cent the higher education level. The rural female population constituted 15.7 per cent; 3.7 per cent attained the lower secondary level, 1.1 per cent the upper secondary or vocational training level, and 0.08 per cent the higher education level. These figures are taken from statistical information relating to the population aged five years and over by educational status, according to area, sex and age group, in which the total number of females in urban areas appears as 6,798,259 and in rural areas as 1,113,951.

146. With regard to the number of male and female members of the teaching profession at the pre-school, primary, secondary and vocational training levels, the Ministry of Education's statistical services have reported that, during the period between the school years 1980-1981 and 1986-1987, the percentages remained virtually unchanged at the pre-school level. For the school year 1980-1981, 1.6 per cent of teachers were male and 98.4 per cent were female. At the primary level, it was found that the percentage distribution of teachers by sex for the above-mentioned period had remained stable, being 16.9 per cent males and 83.1 per cent females in the school year 1980-1981, and 16.8 per cent for males and 83.2 per cent for females in the school year 1986-1987. Regarding lower secondary education (seventh to ninth grades), upper secondary education and vocational training, an increase of 4.9 per cent in female teachers and a decrease in male teachers were observed. For the school year 1980-1981 at this level, male teachers constituted 49.5 per cent and female teachers 50.5 per cent. For the school year 1986-1987, male teachers represented 44.6 per cent and female teachers 55.4 per cent.

147. The participation of women in teacher training and education courses is high.

148. It can be concluded from the foregoing that Venezuela is a country where there is no gender-based discrimination in the exercise of the right to education by all, as is embodied in the Constitution and in the Education Organization Act.

149. Also, the Ministry of Education has accorded priority to literacy programmes. However, the problem has still not been eradicated to the desired extent.

F. Employment development

150. Venezuelan women have contributed to the socio-economic development process in various ways, chiefly through domestic work and economic activity. Their participation in employment has been conditioned by the specific characteristics of Venezuela's development and by their gender status in general.

151. Women's entry into the labour market is closely linked to their educational status, the participation rate being higher among women with a higher level of education.

152. The principal area of women's employment is the service industry.

153. A high percentage of women are employed in the private sector.

154. Female professional and technical workers fall predominantly within the public-sector employee and worker group.

Female employment

155. The female employment situation in Venezuela is similar to that of 1985. The main trends are continuing but, as a result of the recession, large numbers of women – and also many children – have engaged in income-producing occupations. The specific economic activity rate for women in Venezuela was 29.4 per cent in 1981, but has increased significantly in recent years. In 1990 it was 36.9 per cent and in 1991 38.8 per cent; in 1992 it fell to 37.9 per cent, and in the first half of 1993 it was 36.5 per cent. Women's economic participation has risen faster than that of men. Between 1989 and 1992, the rate of women's entry into the labour force was 16.94 per cent, while the rate of increase in the case of men was 5.97 per cent.

156. The overall rate of activity (per 100 persons over 15 years participating in economic activities) has mainly been affected by women joining the economically active population, since the rate for men did not change significantly during the period under review. It was 56.3 per cent in 1987, 56.8 per cent in 1988, 57.9 per cent in 1990 and 60.2 per cent in 1991, falling to 59.4 per cent in 1992 and to 58.4 per cent in 1993.

157. The overall unemployment rate between 1990 and 1991 fell from 10.9 to 10.3, but this reduction was reflected differently in the individual rates for men and women. For men, the rate fell from 11.6 to 10.4 per cent, while for women it rose from 9.3 to 10.2 per cent. In general terms, the unemployment rate has been falling: it was 9.9 per cent in 1990, 8.7 per cent in 1991, 7.1 per cent in 1992 and 6.9 per cent in 1993. The pattern of female unemployment was as follows: 9.4 per cent in 1990, 8.6 per cent in 1991, 5.9 per cent in 1992 and 5.6 per cent in 1993.

158. With regard to the participation of Venezuelan women in the various branches of economic activity, the situation is again similar to that existing in 1985. Their participation in agricultural activities has continued to follow the same trend. In 1993, only 29,074 women were engaged in agricultural work, equivalent to 5.5 per cent, while the number of men occupied in such activities was 496,389 (94.4 per cent). The economic activity in which women are mostly employed is still the service sector, employing 53.7 per cent in 1990 and 24.5 per cent in 1993. Following in descending order, according to the 1990 census, are commerce and financial institutions (26.5 per cent) and manufacturing (12.9 per cent). These are the same activities as those indicated in the 1981 census.

159. The figures for 1993 show that women are principally employed as service workers (24.5 per cent), professional and technical workers (23.1 per cent), clerical workers (20.9 per cent), sales workers (18.2 per cent), craft and manual workers (9.1 per cent) and administrative and managerial workers (1.68 per cent).

160. The statistics relating to heads of household are more revealing: 91 per cent male and 63 per cent female. The figures indicate that, in households headed by males, the rate of women's economic participation outside the home is 33 per cent and, where the head of the household is a woman, the rate is 50 per cent.

161. Concerning wage differences between men and women, it can be said that in Venezuela women on average earn 25 per cent less than men for equal work. This difference is more pronounced in some regions of the country, particularly in the west (42.7 per cent), in the central area (38.6 per cent) and in the capital (26.9 per cent). For the age group from 20 to 40 years, the wage difference is 20 per cent.

162. With regard to income levels, we can quote the following sectoral differences for 1992: among self-employed workers, 32 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women earned the basic wage (which was

Bs 9,000 until May 1994 and has now risen to Bs 15,000 per month). In the case of unskilled workers, 8 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women received less than the minimum wage; among unskilled workers with social security coverage, 9 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women earned less than the minimum wage, and among unskilled workers with no social security, 40 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women earned less than the minimum wage.

163. The average monthly income is $202 for women and $259 for men. One obvious reason for this relates to the types of employment taken up by women, in the lowest paid occupations and sectors (the informal sector, particularly domestic service, non-professional self-employment, etc.).

164. With regard to female-headed households, it is no accident that they are classified among the most vulnerable groups in society. This sector has been steadily increasing in the country and currently accounts for 22 per cent. These households have lower total and per capita incomes than households headed by males, even though they have to meet the needs of a similar number of dependents. Added to this is the fact that the economic participation rate for male heads of household is 91 per cent while that for female heads of household is just 63 per cent; furthermore, the number of members of poor households is higher in Venezuela than in other countries of the region, which reduces their per capita income. Caring for their children restricts other opportunities for female heads of poor households; the high proportion of adolescents and children in such homes encourages their entry into the labour force, particularly in the case of boys and young men, while for girls and young women it is an incentive to set up separate families. Teenage pregnancies in many cases mark the point at which girls abandon their studies. Indeed, this phenomenon, which stood at 16 per cent from 1971 to 1985, increased to 18 per cent in 1986 and by 1991 had risen to 20 per cent. School drop-out and repetition are common in such households, but are higher in the case of girls from such homes, which re-creates situations of poverty. The statistics from the social survey (for 1991, 1992 and 1993) confirm this.

165. In conclusion, it can be stated that:

(a) The economic adjustment policies have proved extremely harmful to women and have created adverse conditions for the implementation of the positive aspects of the law;

(b) Participation in decision-making in labour unions, trade associations, business enterprises and public corporations and in policy-making bodies of government in the area of financial affairs is minimal, and there is accordingly no guarantee of an economic development that will lead to genuine social development. This affects women in particular and gives rise to what has been termed the "feminization" of poverty.

166. With regard to the degree of effectiveness of the implementation of all the legal instruments that support the working women of Venezuela, it must be said that the situation is precisely that existing in other sectors. Not only is the organization of civic groups representing female workers (labour unions, trade associations, cooperatives, producers' associations, etc.) generally poor, but there has to date been little indication of their concern about gender-related issues. Women's membership in labour unions and trade associations continues to rise but their representation at the executive levels is still extremely low. Even though all the major workers' confederations in the country have departments to deal with the specific problems of female workers and their families, they are still not really aware of the importance of women's participation in such organizations and in civic life in general.

G. Health

167. Venezuela can be described as a social State governed by the rule of law, whose function is to guarantee the people access to education, health care, transport services and personal safety, which means that the individual should enjoy the benefits of a social security system without distinction based on sex.

168. In the case of Venezuelan women, the Employment Organization Act, in its chapter VI entitled "Protection of maternity and the family", lays down provisions designed to guarantee to women pregnancy care services, antenatal and postnatal leave and nursing breaks.

169. However, structural inequalities still exist in regard to women's access to the health-care system. Although women have greater life expectancy than men, their morbidity rates are higher.

170. The standard of women's health in Venezuela has been affected by inadequate access to medical welfare services, which restricts the provision of comprehensive care, particularly in the poorer sectors of the population, and also by a lack of awareness and understanding that a gender-oriented policy is necessary to meet women's specific requirements.

171. Venezuela's year-on-year population growth rate is 2.6 per cent and its current population is 20,351,645 inhabitants, according to OCEI data for the second half of 1992.

172. In the past, Venezuela had one of the fastest demographic growth rates in Latin America, its population having tripled in 30 years (1950-1980).

173. The life expectancy of Venezuelan women is 74.73 years, that of men being 68.95 years. The life expectancy at birth of the female population of Venezuela rose by almost 17 years between 1950 and 1990 and it is estimated that it will have increased by 18.12 years by 1995.

174. The maternal and infant population of Venezuela for 1994 totalled 14,312,817 inhabitants, which represents 67.59 per cent of the overall total. The maternal mortality rate (number of deaths per 100,000 live births) did not fall overall between 1985 and 1989; having been 60 in 1985 and 1986 and 50 in 1987, it rose again to 60 in 1988 and to 70 in 1989. The provisional figures for 1990, 1991 and 1992 also indicate a rate of 60 deaths per 100,000 live births.

175. In the years 1990, 1991 and 1992, maternal deaths arising from causes related to pregnancy and child-birth increased, particularly in four federal states.

176. Infant and child mortality rates have shown a significant decrease. For children under the age of one year, the rate was 33.6 per thousand live births for the period from 1980 to 1985, 26.9 per thousand for the period from 1985 to 1990 and 23.2 per thousand for the period from 1990 to 1995.

177. Mortality rates for children between one and four years of age for the same five-year periods and in the same order were 2.74, 1.70 and 1.29.

178. The rates for children of both sexes between one and four years of age were 116.04 per 100,000 (2,456 deaths) for 1988 and 113.41 per 100,000 (2,453 deaths) for 1991.

179. The fertility rate has fallen considerably over the last 40 years. The general fertility rate per thousand women of the female population of child-bearing age (15 to 49 years) was 31.1 [*sic*] for the period 1980-1985, 121.5 for the period 1985-1990, and 108.0 for the period 1990-1995.

180. The statistics on fertility indicate that the age group with the highest fertility rate between 1986 and 1991 was the 20-24 year group, in second position the 25-29 year group, and in third position the 35-39 year group. The fertility rate among teenagers of between 15 and 19 years of age has been increasing: in 1986, 96.8 per thousand women of between 15 and 19 years had a child, a figure which has gradually risen to 109.75 births to women of between 15 and 19 years per thousand live births recorded in 1991.

181. In Venezuela, a decrease in child-bearing can be observed, which is evidence of a major change in reproductive behaviour. At the start of the 1980s the total fertility rate was 4.4 births per woman and for the early 1990s 3.6 births per woman.

Percentage of women using contraceptives

182. Owing to sociocultural factors, the general view exists that women are to be responsible for using contraceptive methods.

183. The proportion of women aged between 15 and 19 years using contraceptives was 14.8 per cent (753,475) in 1992. Contraceptive methods used in 1991 were, in order of preference, intra-uterine devices (373,675 users), orally administered oestrogen (310,705 users), condoms (25,304 users) and other methods (24,424 users).

184. Venezuela currently has 1,312 family planning offices, which are administered by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and classified as types A, B and C.

Nutritional situation among children less than five years old

185. The Dietary and Nutritional Monitoring Programme conducted in Venezuela by the National Institute for Nutrition produces findings which may or may not indicate trends for the population as a whole but nevertheless give an idea of the situation in each region of the country.

186. The measuring of weight at birth has been proposed by the World Health Organization as one indicator for monitoring progress towards health for all by the year 2000. It has been stated that, by that date, 90 per cent of newly born infants should have a minimum weight of 2,500 g, which means that low birth weight should be encountered in only 10 per cent of new births.

187. In a preliminary study carried out during the second half of 1992 covering 8,318 live-born infants classified according to weight at birth, the newly born infants with low birth weight exceeded the levels fixed in the targets by more than 10 per cent (11.5 per cent).

188. Among children of pre-school age (two to six years), diet deficiency has fallen considerably. The decrease – from 30 per cent in 1988 to between 23 and 24 per cent in 1993 – is greater among girls and more pronounced in the case of acute malnutrition than chronic malnutrition, whether compensated or otherwise.

189. With regard to acute malnutrition among children less than 15 years old, the downward trend is continuing; conversely, compensated chronic malnutrition increased rapidly until 1991 but then fell, reaching 15.95 per cent for females and 17.75 per cent for males by the first quarter of 1993. This has been reflected in the total deficiency rate, which has shown the same trend.

190. These results are being used in the planning of dietary and nutritional policies, and it is important to indicate the results by age group and sex, since these are regarded as the most precise indicators for decision-making in the area of social spending.

191. In Venezuela, there is no vaccination breakdown by sex; the recorded figures show the percentage coverage among infants of less than one year. In 1984, the coverage was 65.6 and in 1993 72.4 (source: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Division for Contagious Diseases, Department of Epidemiological Monitoring).

192. In 1993, 441,309 infants of less than one year received the BCG vaccination (single routine dose) out of a total of 547,165, representing 88.7 per cent (source: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Division for Contagious Diseases, Department of Epidemiological Monitoring).

193. The percentage of pregnant women fully immunized against tetanus was 29 per cent for both 1980 and 1993.

194. The percentages of births attended by authorized personnel (medical practitioners or midwives) for 1980 and 1992 were 97.8 per cent (medical practitioners) and 1.25 and 1.06 per cent (midwives).

195. In 1992, a total of 279,404 births were attended: 244,253 (87.42 per cent) in hospitals, 28,959 (10.36 per cent) in outpatient departments, 2,951 (1.06 per cent) by midwives, and 3,143 at clinics and elsewhere (source: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Statistical Unit of the Maternal and Child Care Division).

Cases of women infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

196. Between 1982 and 1987, on average 2.3 cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in women were reported annually. The combined total number of cases from 1982 to 31 December 1993 is 3,325, of which 265 relate to women, representing 7.97 per cent, with 153 deaths.

197. There is some underregistration, but this is outside our control, in view of the stigmatizing characteristics of this disease from every point of view: family, society, employment and education, among others.

198. The number of HIV-positive women referred to above will continue to increase. The age group most affected is between 20 and 39 years.

Cancer of the cervix

199. Cancer of the cervix is a public-health problem in our country, this disease being one of the major reasons for consultation and hospitalization. It ranks as the second most common cause of death among the female population. The estimated rate is 33.3 for every 100,000 women, representing approximately 20 per cent of deaths.

200. Cancer of the cervix accounts for 19.99 per cent of all forms of cancer detected in women, breast cancer constituting 11.23 per cent.

Mental health

201. The actual situation regarding the mental health of the population in Venezuela is unknown. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare records solely the statistics corresponding to its mental health services, and these statistics suffer from serious limitations in terms of coverage and owing to reporting delays.

202. Expressed in absolute figures, five-year averages and percentages, the main reason for initial consultations during the period 1988-1992 can be seen to be neurotic disorders at 13.40 per cent (for the four years from 1988 to 1991, schizophrenia (295) rising to the top position in 1992 only), followed, in descending order, by epilepsy (345) at 9.92 per cent, schizophrenia (295) at 8.91 per cent, mental retardation (317) at 7.89 per cent and selective retardation in development (315) at 7.73 per cent, followed by more imprecisely diagnosed causes such as depressive disorders not classified elsewhere, emotional disturbances peculiar to childhood and adolescence, etc., and finally hyperkinetic syndrome in childhood (314) at

3.06 per cent (source: *Boletines de Estadísticas Psicopatológicas* 13-17, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Division of Mental Health).

203. It should be pointed out that among the main reasons for initial consultations in connection with mental disorders are diagnoses specific to the child and juvenile population, a phenomenon that was not in evidence in previous years, which would allow one to speculate upon a possible trend towards seeking assistance earlier.

Women's health-care programmes in Venezuela

204. With regard to the **most useful programmes and experiments being conducted by and on behalf of women with a view to their advancement**, these stem from the fact that the predominant model of medical attention in our country is characterized by an approach based on curative rather than preventive action.

205. The health-care facilities provided in Venezuela are administered primarily by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, which is the governing health body, by the Venezuelan Social Security Institute and by the federal authorities, among others.

206. The national health system was set up in our country with a view to integrating and coordinating all existing institutions that provide health services, in order to ensure the efficient and more cost-effective use of resources earmarked for the health-care needs of the entire population. This health system is based on medical attention of increasing sophistication according to the level of care: primary, secondary or tertiary.

207. Under our health system, the territorial framework of local planning or basic unit is the health district (health division regulations issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare). These arrangements are currently being amended owing to the country's new geopolitical structure and the effects of the decentralization policy.

208. **The programmes focusing on women's health in Venezuela** are being developed by the Maternal and Child Care Office within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. This Office is responsible for formulating policies and drawing up programmes and other schemes aimed at promoting the health of the mother and child group, which made up 67.80 per cent of the population in 1993. It is structured around three divisions: the Maternal Care and Family Planning Division, the Child and Adolescent Health Division and the Administrative Division.

209. The functions of the Maternal and Child Care Office encompass specific components, as described below:

(a) **Maternal care**. The aim of this component is to provide comprehensive care for women, specifically in the spheres of gynaecology and obstetrics, through family life education and monitoring of the different stages of their reproductive life based on risk criteria, with a view to timely and appropriate diagnosis and treatment, thereby enabling women, their family units and the community to enjoy improved standards of health and quality of life.

A programme that has been in operation since 1991 under an agreement between the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the breast-feeding programme, whose purpose is to promote breast-feeding as the sole form of nourishment for infants up to four or six months and as a diet supplement up to the first year of life.

The Maternal and Infant Dietary Programme is the product of an idea put forward by the Maternal and Child Care Office with a view to supplementing the nutrition provided by the mother and to extending the coverage of antenatal and postnatal care.

Milk or "lactovisoy" (baby-feeding formula) is distributed free of charge at health centres, the target population being indigent pregnant and lactating women and children under six years of age living in poverty.

(b) **Family planning**. The family planning component aims to achieve better standards of health and quality of life among women of child-bearing age, a marked reduction in the rates of maternal, perinatal and infant morbidity and mortality, and generally improved family well-being through the provision of social justice, by enabling the sectors most in need – as is done by the higher-income groups – to control and decide themselves on the number of children they wish to have and can support and bring up.

In 1976, family planning activities were incorporated, as a mandatory element, into the preventive medicine programmes and schemes at all health establishments administered by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and included in maternal and child-care programmes.

The nationwide target originally set for 1992 was approximately 1,900,000 women, representing a coverage of 14.82 per cent of females aged between 15 and 49 years; this figure is currently being revised owing to a shortage of contraceptives.

The areas of family planning action include information and education concerning responsible parenthood, care services for women of child-bearing age, assistance for couples with fertility problems, early detection of cervical and breast cancer, provision of family life education and information for the public, sex education, infertility, pregnancy and genetic counselling, as well as examination and appropriate referral in cases of sexually transmitted diseases.

(c) **Child and adolescent care**. Within the Child and Adolescent Health Division, the Comprehensive Youth Health Care Programme was set up in 1991 with technical and financial support from UNICEF, the Pan-American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. The educational guide in this connection deals with the issues of prevention in relation to reproductive health, drugs, accidents, violence, mental health, nutrition and oral health. With regard to reproductive health, the most disturbing problem referred to is the early commencement of sexual activity (before the age of 18 years).

H. Rural women

210. The problem of rural women in Venezuela has increased over the last 20 years, and attempts have been made to direct the focus of rural programmes towards women. It can be seen that such efforts have been inadequate, and considerable economic and social inequalities continue to exist between rural men and women and between the rural and urban populations.

211. Despite the difficulty in obtaining gender-disaggregated statistics, the analyses presented show us that women still occupy a subordinate sociocultural position, which is reflected in their low levels of participation in rural development projects.

212. The Venezuelan Government's lack of a comprehensive and coherent social policy for the sector has meant that the rural population is still facing a disturbing situation with regard to its effective participation in the various stages of the productive process, its standards of living and its sociocultural development. This is fostering a withdrawal from the rural labour force (rural-to-urban migration) owing to an inability to satisfy basic needs to an adequate extent.

213. According to the latest census, the population of Venezuela stands at 18,105,265 inhabitants, of whom 3,192,297 are rural dwellers, comprising peasant farmers and indigenous persons. The peasant farming population totals 2,877,525 and the indigenous population 314,772, which includes 154,821 females, representing 49.18 per cent.

214. The indigenous population makes up 1.73 per cent and the rural farming population 14.17 per cent of the total national population.

1. Public bank credit for the rural sector

Financing

215. The Agricultural and Livestock Credit Institute (ICAP) is the financial institution that provides for the credit needs of the rural sector. It operates the following programmes:

Economic Farming Organization (OEC) Programme

216. In recent years, this programme has declined considerably, owing to the economic crisis, 1,334 of the 2,000 farming organizations operating in 1983 having since disappeared. The 666 organizations remaining in 1993 had an overall membership of 13,223, comprising 15.50 per cent women (2,050 members) and 84.50 per cent men (11,173 members). Also, 343 women serve on the executive boards of these organizations, representing 16 per cent of the total female members and 2.59 per cent of the overall OEC membership of 13,223.

Housewives' Programme

217. Between 1984 and 1991, a total of 1,540 women benefited from this programme, receiving funding of Bs 30,518,923.97.

218. It should be pointed out that, in 1991, 856 women obtained financing totalling Bs 51,337,510.44. This means that, in just one year (1992), women received funds in excess of those provided over a seven-year period (1984-1991).

Integral Farm Programme

219. Under this programme, which was introduced in 1985, 754 families have been assisted up to 1992, having received funds of Bs 73,177.8 million on a financing basis of Bs 600,000 for the development of an area of three hectares per family. This programme has been primarily aimed at women and their households.

Small-scale Agro-industrial and Craft Programme

220. This programme was set up in 1986. During the period from 1987 to 1990, the number of beneficiaries was 277, the total amount received being Bs 17,633.5 million.

Indigenous Programme

221. During the period between 1985 and 1992, ICAP provided funds totalling Bs 34,104,600 to 1,837 indigenous families belonging to the different ethnic groups (Guajira, Warao, Kariña, Guahibo, Yucpas, Maquiritare and Panare) for the development of small-scale fishing and farming activities.

222. It should be pointed out that indigenous women have benefited significantly from these small-scale enterprise loans.

Other financial contributions

223. In addition to the assistance provided by ICAP in this connection, non-governmental organizations - such as the Public Action Service Centre (CESAP) - have contributed towards the financing of agro-economic projects, for which 112 loans were granted under the Rural Action Scheme in 1993 to 69 women (including 27 heads of household), who have undertaken bee-keeping, coffee-milling and other programmes, with credits amounting to Bs 10,215,000.

2. Ownership of rural land and rural and urban dwellings

224. From the legal viewpoint, there are no barriers to Venezuelan women's acquiring rural land and urban property. In this connection, article 61 of the 1960 Constitution lays down that no discrimination based on race, sex, creed or social status shall be permitted.

225. The allocation of rural land is governed by the 1960 Agrarian Reform Act.

226. In 1992, women held 1,687 legalized plots of land out of a total of 6,734 plots, i.e. 25 per cent. Between 1960 and 1992, 171,883 plots were legally settled, 31,420 of these plots (18.27 per cent) being assigned to women.

227. One fourth of all the plots legally settled in 1993 were held by women. This indicates that, in reality, women are still in a minority with regard to access to land. It is nevertheless clear that the situation has improved in comparison with the period from 1960 to 1992.

228. It should be pointed out in this connection that the administrative body of government responsible for dealing with problems relating to rural accommodation in Venezuela is the Sectoral Environmental Health Office through the Sanitation Facilities Office, which has an autonomous division attached to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare that processes the various applications within the sector.

229. In Venezuela, according to the statistical data supplied by the above-mentioned division, in the last 35 years (including combined figures for the ten-year period 1959-1968), dwellings have been awarded to a total of 415,102 families, of which 116,125 (40 per cent) are headed by women and 248,937 (60.42 per cent) are male-headed households.

Notes

[1] Robert Dowse and John A. Hughes, *Sociología Política*. Ed. Alianza, 1993.

[2] Mercedes Pulido de Briceño and Clarisa Sanoja de Ochoa, "Visión conceptual de la violencia. Aspectos legales del maltrato de la mujer en Venezuela. Los medios de comunicación. Propuesta de acción". *II Congreso Venezolano de la Mujer: Mujer y Poder*, Caracas, Venezuela. Impresos Urbinas, 1992.

[3] Op. cit., p. 4.

[4] Ibid., p. 7.

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